# THE JOURNAL OF INDIAN ART AND INDUSTRY

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MOGHUL COLOUR DECORATION OF AGRA,

BY THE LATE EDMUND W. SMITH, M.R.A.S.

(*Archæologist to the Government of India, N.W. Provinces*).

Illustrated by 17 Plates, including—

Decorated Cornice and Spandrils.

Painted Decoration upon Soffits.

View of Akbar's Tomb.

Tiled Ornamentation.

View of Itimad-ud-daulah's Tomb.

Mosaic Pavement and Borders.

Inlaid Ornamentation. Coloured Tiling.

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BY IVIE HAMILTON.

RAM SINGH DEL. MAYO SCHOOL OF ART LAHORE

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# IRON WORK.

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The Journal of Indian Art and Industry.

# MOGHUL COLOUR DECORATION OF AGRA.

## ILLUSTRATED BY EXAMPLES FROM THE CHINI-KA-RAUZA, ITIMAD-UD-DAULAH'S TOMB, AND THE KANCH MAHAL.

BY THE LATE EDMUND W. SMITH, ESQ., M.R.A.S.
*Archæologist to Government of India, N.W. Provinces.*

The vaulting of the dome springs from a bold cornice of a concave shape. As Plate 155 shows, the ground of this is painted a deep chocolate, and upon it repose rich scrolls in light blue and a deeper shade of chocolate, enriched with floral wreaths in gold and green. The nose of the cornice is flat, and the face is coloured a rich dark blue bordered with narrow bands of gold. Upon the blue ground is an undulating scroll in white and gold.

As previously mentioned, the sides of the octagonal chamber below the dome are deeply recessed from the face of the main wall of the room. The recesses on four of the sides of the chamber are square on plan, and lead to doorways admitting to vestibules beyond, and the other four are pentagonal in shape. All of the recesses are arched at the top, and the spandrils of the arches are most exquisitely and chastely painted with arabesques in rich and beautiful colours. The designs are varied, those in the spandrils in front of the pentagonal recesses being different to those upon the spandrils over the four arches in front of the square recesses.

The spandrils are plastered, and the ornamentation on four of them is raised about a quarter of an inch from the surface (Plate 156), whereas in the other cases it is painted on the surface of the plaster itself. Where this is the case, the faces of the spandrils are painted white (Plate 157), but where the ornamentation is raised they are coloured Indian red.

Painted in the middle of the spandrils are blue plaques or tablets edged with leaves, inscribed in Arabic characters; in some cases with the name of God (Allah), and in others with that of Muhammad. Surrounding and flowing from the outer rim of the inscribed tablets, and completely filling up the fields of the spandrils, are graceful floral scrolls, which in some instances are gilded, whilst in others they are painted in a variety of colours. The outer edges of the spandrils are splayed and are decorated with a creeper pattern in gold and white upon a deep blue ground enframed by gilded tooth-moulded borders.

The face of the wall above the top of the spandrils, and the cornice (before described) below the springing of the dome covering the chamber, are sunk out with oblong-shaped panels, which are filled up with Arabic texts in raised Tughra characters. As Plate 157 shows, the characters are gilded, whilst the background of the panels is painted blue. The panels are enclosed by chocolate-coloured borders enriched with floral ornamentation, which continue down and enclose the outer sides of the spandrils.

The soffits, or ceilings of the recesses, are most beautifully groined and decorated in rich colours in keeping with the rest of the chamber. An illustration of one of the ceilings is presented on Plate 158, from which the style of decoration may be studied.

Unfortunately, for some years the Chînî-kâ-Rauzâ was occupied by a native cultivating the land adjoining the tomb, who, regardless of the beautiful decoration upon the walls and ceilings, lighted his fires and cooked his food inside the rooms, with the result that much of the decoration has been irreparably spoilt and damaged. For years the tomb was in a shocking state of dilapidation. Little or nothing was done to preserve it, and visitors used to hack off pieces of the beautiful tiling from the outside walls and carry them away to distant homes as souvenirs of the place. The writer called the attention of Government to the state of affairs, who took the matter up, with the result that the tomb is now protected and well cared for. It has been enclosed by a railing, and the enclosure between the railing and the tomb has been neatly planted with shrubs. As far as possible, the tomb has been repaired structurally to arrest further decay, but no renovation or restoration has been attempted. The tomb bears no inscription, and it is not known for whom it was built; but traditionally it is ascribed to 'Afzal Khân, a poet, who died at Lâhôr in A.D. 1639.

Similar tiling to that used for ornamenting the exterior of the Chînî-kâ-Rauzâ (described in Parts 78 and 79 of this journal) was employed for covering the outside of the kiosques round the third floor of Akbar's tomb at Sikandrâ (see Plate 159), commenced by Akbar himself, but completed by his son Jahângîr between A.D. 1605 and 1615. Examples of these tiles are illustrated on Plates 160 to 164. Plate 160, fig. 1, shows the manner in

which the tiles are laid upon the cupolas of the kiosques, and Plates 161, 162, 163, and 164 show the designs in detail.

In most cases star patterns, surrounded or combined with hexagonal and other geometrical figures, have been used. In some places, portions of the patterns have decayed and have been replaced by tiles of a totally different design (Plate 162). Most of the designs are geometrical, but in some cases floral patterns have been introduced (see figs. 1 and 2, Plate 161, and fig. 1, Plate 163). On one of the cupolas we find the ancient *swastika* worked in, in white (Plate 161, fig. 3) upon a blue ground, in the centre of a star, the points of which are green.

There is another building at Sikandrâ where encaustic tiling was used by the Moghuls for decorative purposes. It is situated a little to the east of Akbar's tomb, within a walled garden, and was built as a residence by Jahângîr (so it is said) for his queen Jôdh Bâî. Without exception, it is one of the finest specimens of Moghul domestic architecture in the district.

Exteriorly it measures 52 feet 10 inches by 45 feet 2 inches, and is two storeys high. On the ground floor is a large central hall, 16 feet square, with three rooms on both the east and west sides. Above them, on the upper floor, are other rooms, which look out into the upper of the central hall, which is open from the ground floor to the roof.

The rooms on the north-east and north-west corners of the building have bay windows in them which command a view of Akbar's tomb. They are of a semi-hexagonal shape, and are carried on beautifully carved stone corbels. The sides of the bays are filled in with geometrical stone tracery, and are roofed by semi-domes which are ornamented on the outside with enamelled tiling similar to that found upon the Chînî-kâ-Rauzâ and the kiosques round the upper part of Akbar's tomb (Plate 170). The parapet round the top of the building, and the cornice beneath it are ornamented throughout with tiling (Plate 171), and the same material is used in the top of some square-headed windows on the east and west sides of the building.

In the first part of this paper (Vol. IX, No. 78) it was stated that from Jahângîr's time, in addition to other methods, the Moghul architects relied extensively upon mosaic ornamentation in "pietra-dura" for the decoration of their buildings. We find this exemplified in the tomb of Itimâd-ud-daulah, Agrâ, reference to which has already been made in this journal (Vol. VI, Nos. 46-53, pp. 91-94).

Itimâd-ud-daulah, it may be remembered, was the father of Nûr Jahân, the wife of the emperor Jahângîr. He came originally from Teheran, in Persia, as an adventurer to seek his fortune in India, and was known as Ghiâs Beg. He appears to have been introduced to Akbar's court at Fathpur Sikri, and rose by his ability and industry from one post to another, until he was eventually promoted to the position of Itimâd-ud-daulah, or High Treasurer; and on the marriage of his daughter Mihrunnisâ (the future Nûr Jahân) with Jahângîr, he became *Vakil-i-Kul*, or Prime Minister. His daughter was a highly gifted and talented woman, and possessed immense power during her husband's lifetime; but with his death her influence ceased, and on the accession of Shâh Jahân she retired from the worries of State affairs, and was allotted a liberal pension of two lakhs of rupees per annum. Itimâd-ud-daulah died in 1622, and his daughter devoted her time to building his mausoleum, which was completed about the year 1628.

Like the Chînî-kâ-Rauzâ, the tomb stands in the midst of a large garden, some 180 yards square, surrounded by a wall, except on the west or river side, where there is a terrace. The entrance to the garden is on the east side through a red sandstone gateway, ornamented with marble mosaics.

The tomb (Plate 165) stands on a high plinth and is of a rectangular shape, measuring 69 feet each way. In the centre of the building is a large domed chamber containing Ghais-ud-din's and his wife's tomb, and on the four corners are other mortuary chambers connected by vestibules opening out into the garden. Over the domed chamber is an upper storey, in which there are two white marble cenotaphs. They are surrounded by red marble borders (Plate 167, fig. 1) inlaid with scrolls in bluish-black slate, looped together with small rosettes in white and a mottled marble called *abri*, which comes from Jesalmer in Rajputana.

The tombs in the crypt, as well as the cenotaphs, lie north and south, according to the usual custom, but they are not in the centre of the chambers, as may be seen from Plate 166. The floor round the cenotaphs is of marble mosaic. The ground is of white marble, and inlaid upon it are leaf and floral scrolls in variegated marbles. Surrounding the floor is a broad border composed of leaves in black stone and jasper worked into a chain pattern. A diagram of the border is presented on Plate 167, fig. 2.

Plate 168 is a drawing of the inlaid ornamentation upon the plinth upon which the cenotaph chamber stands, and Plate 169 shows the nature of the inlaid ornamentation upon the upper part of the towers upon the angles of the building (Plate 165). The towers contain staircases leading from the ground floor to the cenotaph chamber,

and, in keeping with the rest of the building, are inlaid from top to bottom with geometrical and floral designs in marble mosaics.

Previous to Jahângîr's time little in the way of mosaic ornamentation had been attempted by the Moghul architects. We meet with it occasionally in Akbar's buildings at Fatḥpûr Sîkrî, erected more towards the close of his reign; but it was not until Jahângîr's reign that it was extensively employed and became one of the characteristic features of the Moghul style. We see it extensively used upon the gate entrances to the grounds round Akbar's tomb at Sikandrâ, erected during the first ten years of Jahângîr's reign, A.D. 1605-1615. In Itimâd-ud-daulah's tomb (1615-1628) we have both mosaic work in coloured marbles and inlaid work, but after Jahângîr's time the mosaic ornamentation gave place entirely to, and was supplanted by, inlaid decoration in "pietra-dura." The finest specimens of this style of decoration are to be seen in the famous Tâj and the Moghul palaces at Agra, and Shâh Jahân's buildings at Delhi.

It was prior to Shâh Jahân's time that the inlaid style of ornamentation called "pietra-dura" came into vogue and was extensively used in Florence and other places in Europe, and it is generally thought it was introduced from Italy by the Italian artists in Shâh Jahân's service.

Like the Chînî-kâ-Rauzâ and Akbar's tomb at Sikandrâ, the interior of Itimâd-ud-daulah's tomb is richly ornamented with paintings chiefly of a floral nature, but as these have already been referred to in Vol. VI, Nos. 47 and 49, of this journal, it is hardly necessary to allude to them again here.

It is unknown where the tiles ornamenting the Chînî-kâ-Rauzâ were manufactured. Probably potters cunning in the art of tile-making were brought from Sindh or the Panjâb to Agrâ for the work, as most of the colours found in these Provinces are met with in the panels upon the walls of the Chînî-kâ-Rauzâ.

Sir George Birdwood has devoted a chapter or so to the manufacture of Indian encaustic tiles and pottery in his book entitled *Industrial Arts of India*, and any reader wishing to study the subject further is referred to the work.[1]

[1] *Industrial Arts of India*, by Sir George Birdwood, pp. 304 *et seq.* Published at London in 1880.

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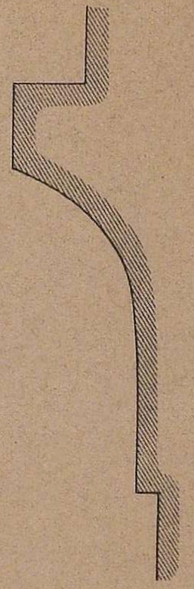
AGRA : CHÎNÎ-KA-RAUZA. DETAIL OF DECORATED CORNICE ROUND THE INTERIOR OF THE CENOTAPH CHAMBER.



Section

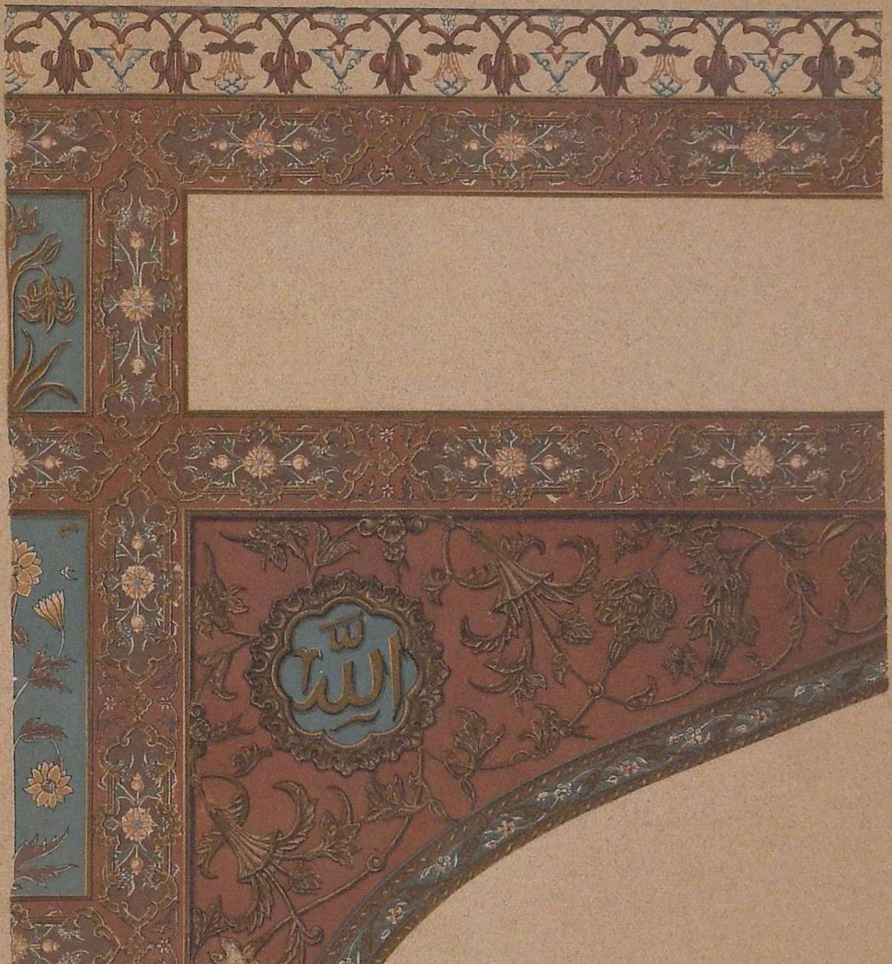
Inches 12 6 1 2 3 Feet

SCALE OF FEET

Edwd. W. Smith

*Archæological Surveyor N.W.P.*

AGRA : CHÍNÍ-KA-RAUZA. DECORATED SPANDRILS OVER THE ARCHED RECESSES ON THE GROUND FLOOR OF THE CENOTAPH CHAMBER.



BHAIRAV BAKHSH, DEL.

Inches 12 6 1 2 3 Feet

SCALE OF FEET

Edmd. W. Smith

*Archæological Surveyor N.W.P.*

AGRA : CHÎNÍ-KA-RAUZA. DECORATED SPANDRILS OVER THE ARCHED RECESSES ON THE GROUND FLOOR OF THE CENOTAPH CHAMBER [A]

Section

Edmd. W. Smith

*Archæological Surveyor N.W.P.*

Inches 12 9 6 3 1 2 Feet

SCALE OF FEET

BHAIRAV BAKHSH & RAM PRATAP, DEL.

AGRA: Chînî-ka-Rauza. Painted Decoration upon the Soffits of the Angle-bays, or Alcoves, in the corners of the Cenotaph Chamber.

RAM SINGH & BHAIRAV BAKHSH, DEL.

Inches 12 9 6 3 . . 1 2 3 Feet

SCALE OF FEET

Edmd. W. Smith

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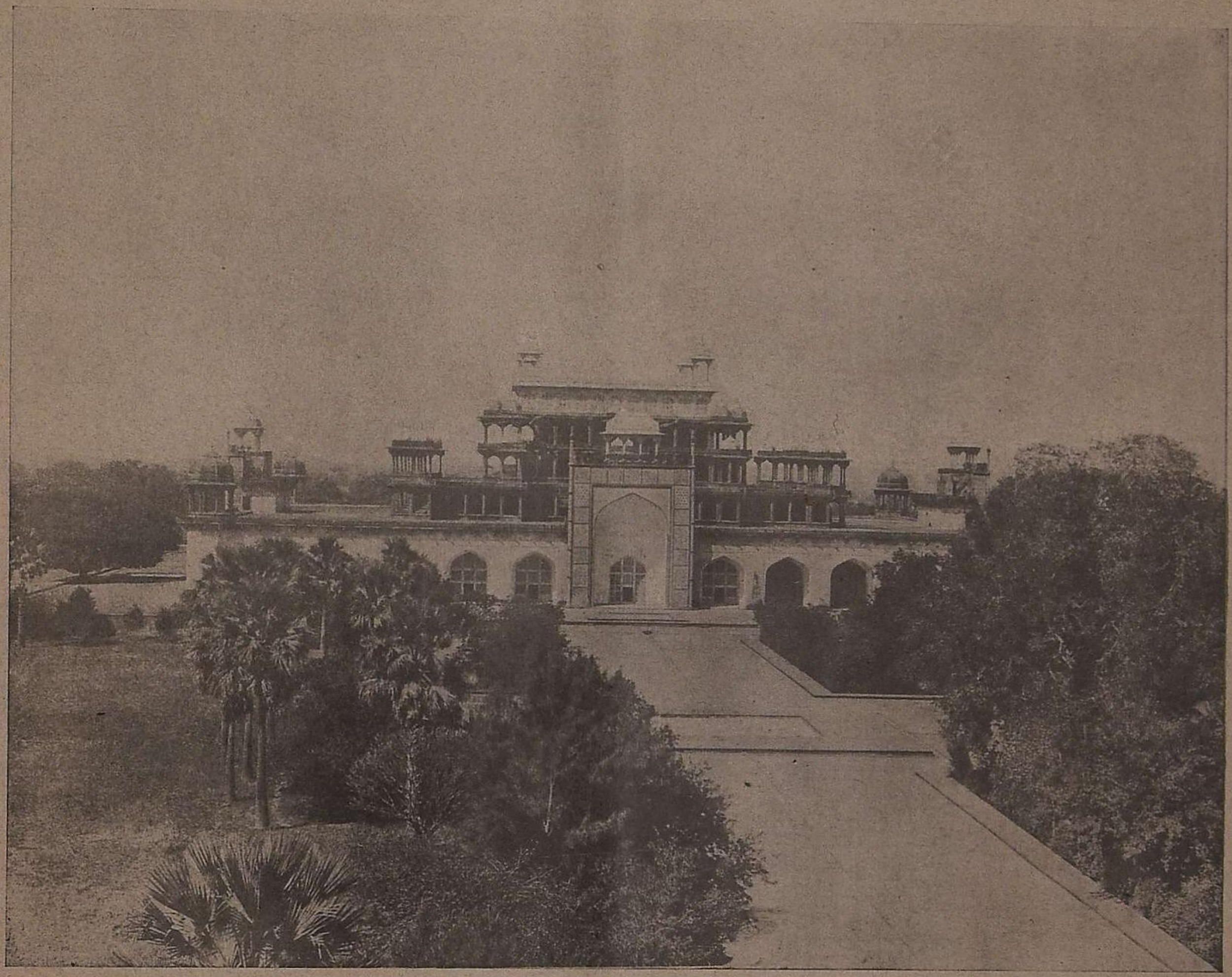
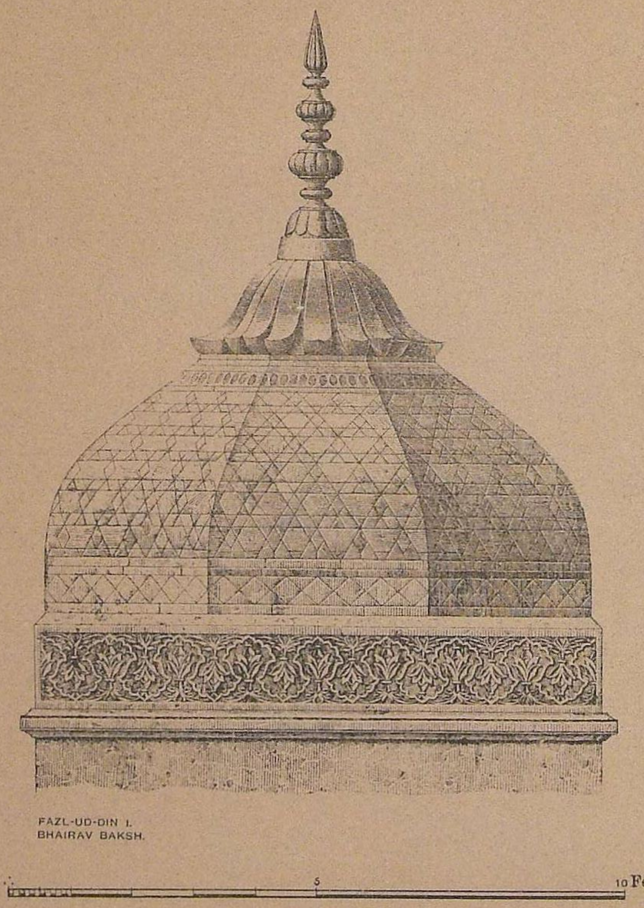


159.—Sikandra, Agra: General View of Akbar's Tomb from the South.

SIKANDRA: Akbar's Tomb. Tiled Ornamentation upon the Kiosques round the Third Floor.



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SIKANDRA : AKBAR'S TOMB. TILED ORNAMENTATION UPON THE KIOSQUES ROUND THE THIRD FLOOR.

Fig. 2.

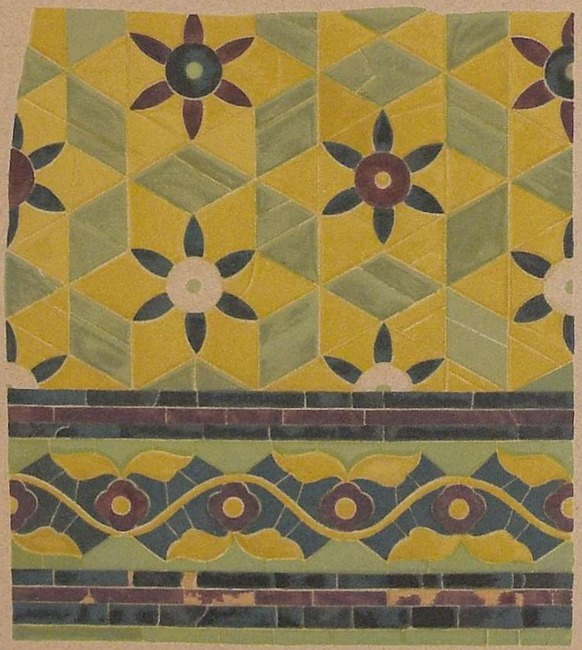

Fig. 1.

Inches 12 9 6 3 1 Foot

SCALE

Fig. 3.

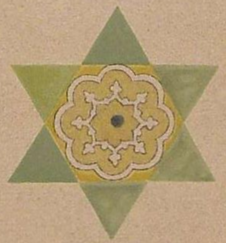

Fig. 4.

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BHAIRAV BAKHSH & FAZL-UD-DIN II. DEL.

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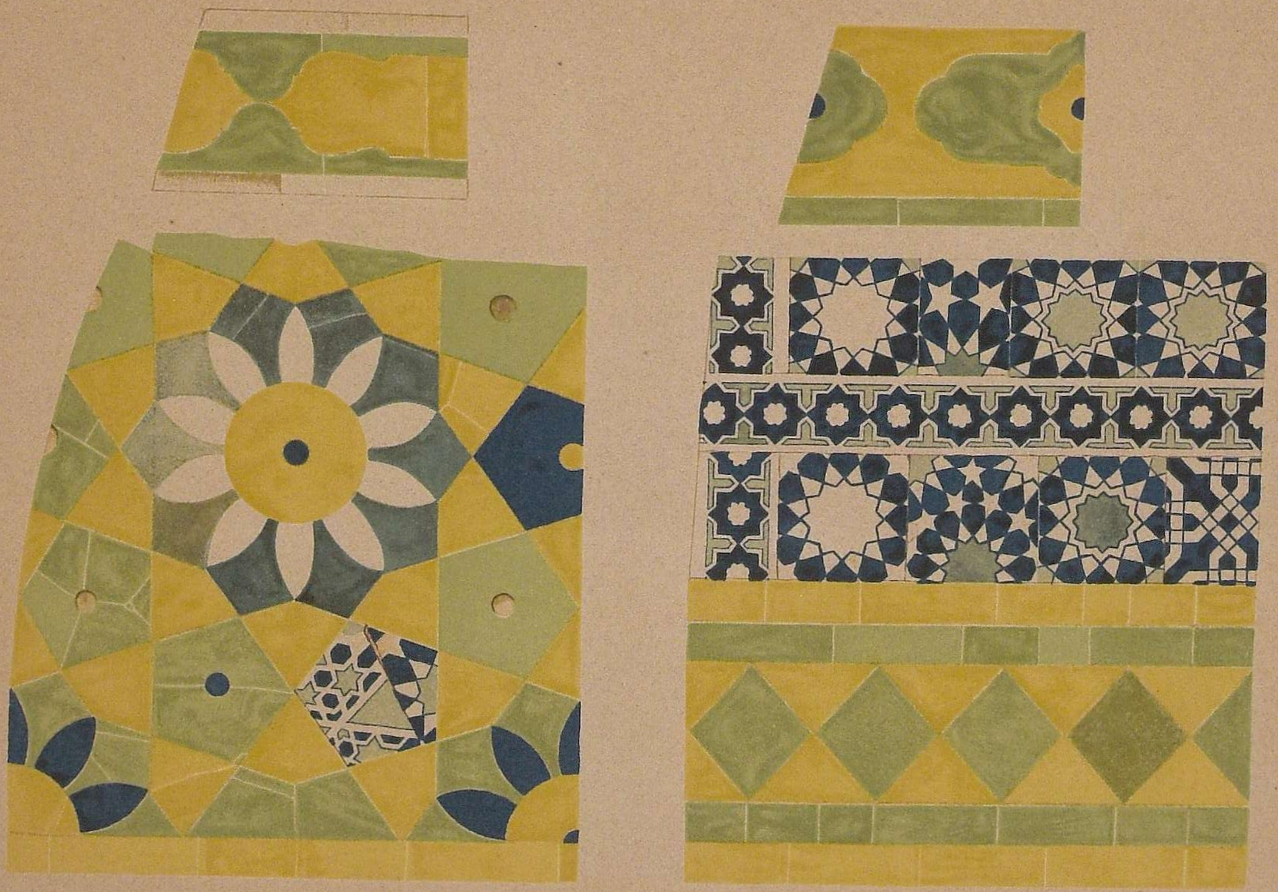

BHAIRAV BAKHSH & FAZL-UD-DIN H. DEL

Inches 12 9 6 3 1 Foot

SCALE

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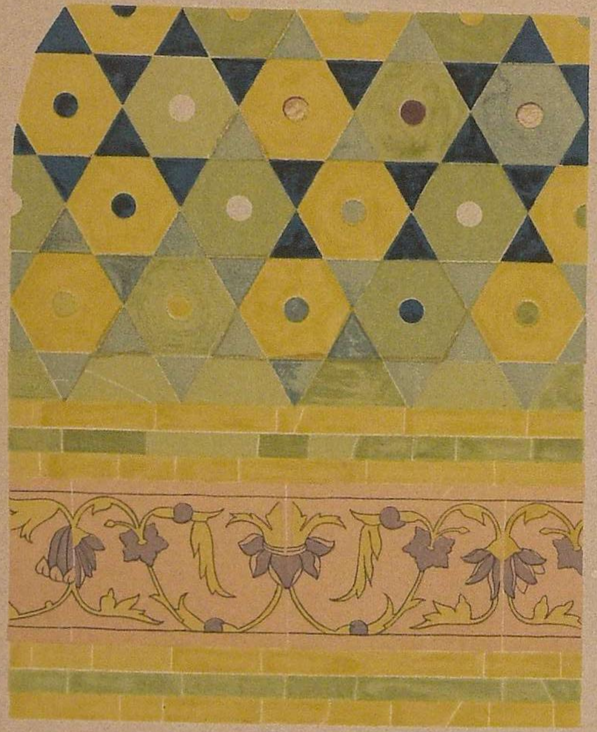

Fig. 1.

Fig. 2.

Inches 12 9 6 3 0 1 Foot

SCALE

BHAIRAV BAKHSH & FAZL-UD-DIN II. DEL

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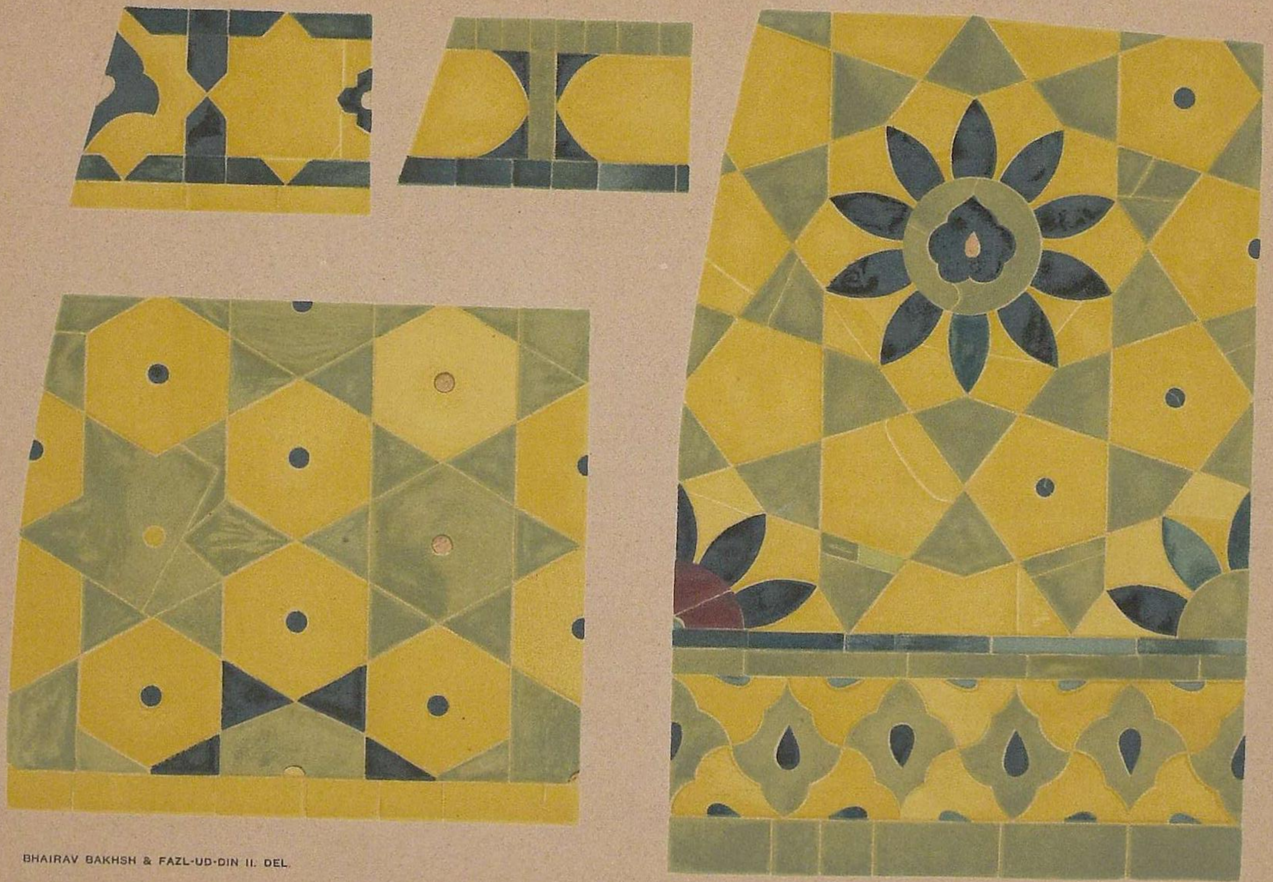

BHAIRAV BAKHSH & FAZL-UD-DIN II. DEL.

Inches 12 9 6 3 0 1 Foot

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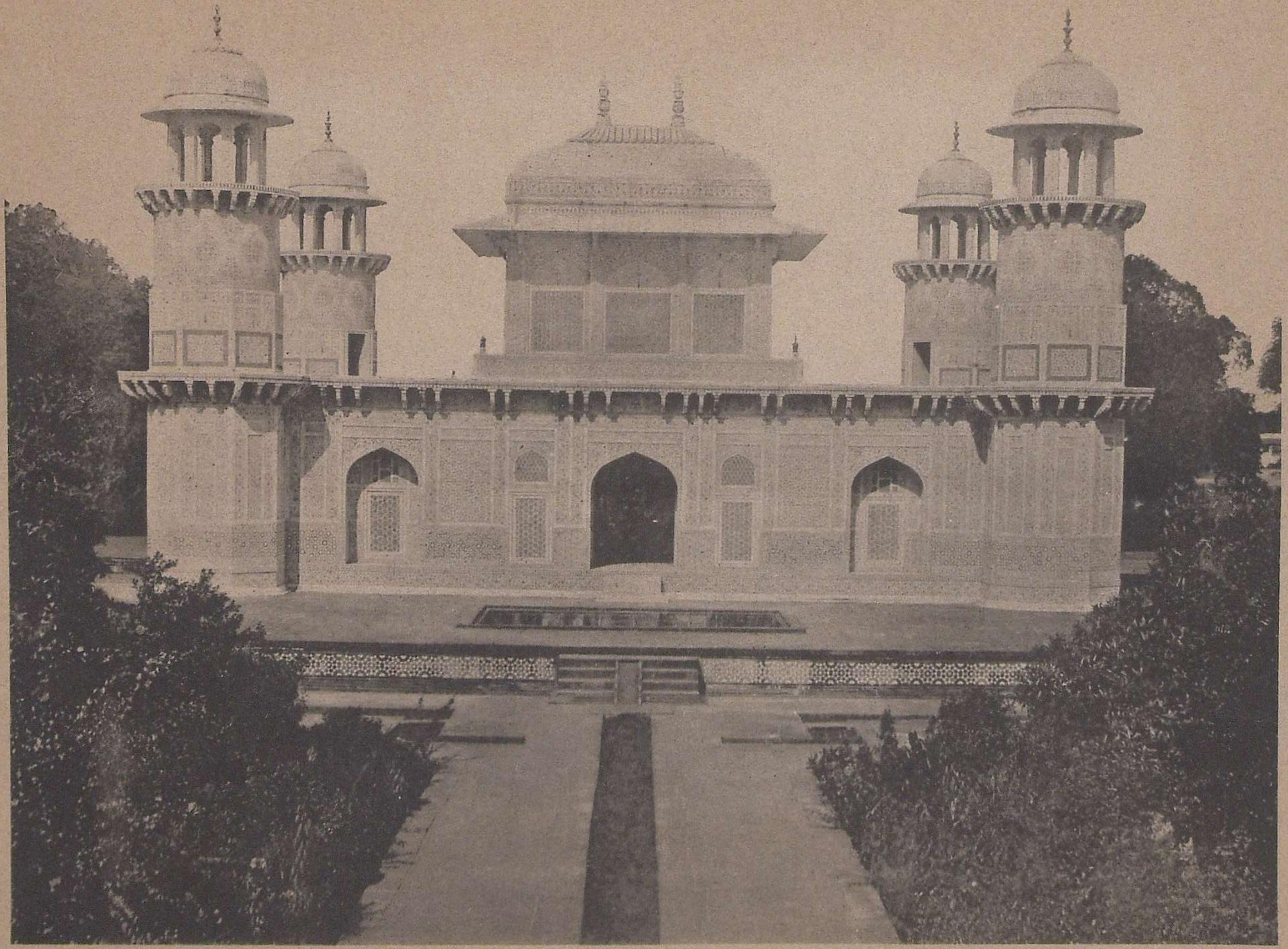
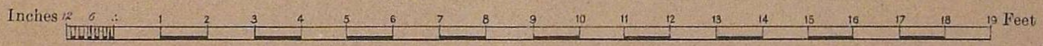


165.—Agra: Itimâd-ud-daulah's Tomb—General View.

AGRA : Itimad-ud-daulah's Tomb. Mosaic Pavement on the Upper Floor.

RAM SINGH & BHAIRAV BAKHSH, DEL.




SCALE OF FEET

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AGRA: Itimad-ud-daulah's Tomb. Details of Mosaic Borders round the Cenotaphs and Mosaic Pavement on the Upper Floor.

Fig. 1.

Inches 12 9 6 3 1 Foot

SCALE

BHAIRAV BAKHSH & RAM SINGH, DEL.

Fig. 2.

Inches 12 9 6 3 1 Foot

SCALE

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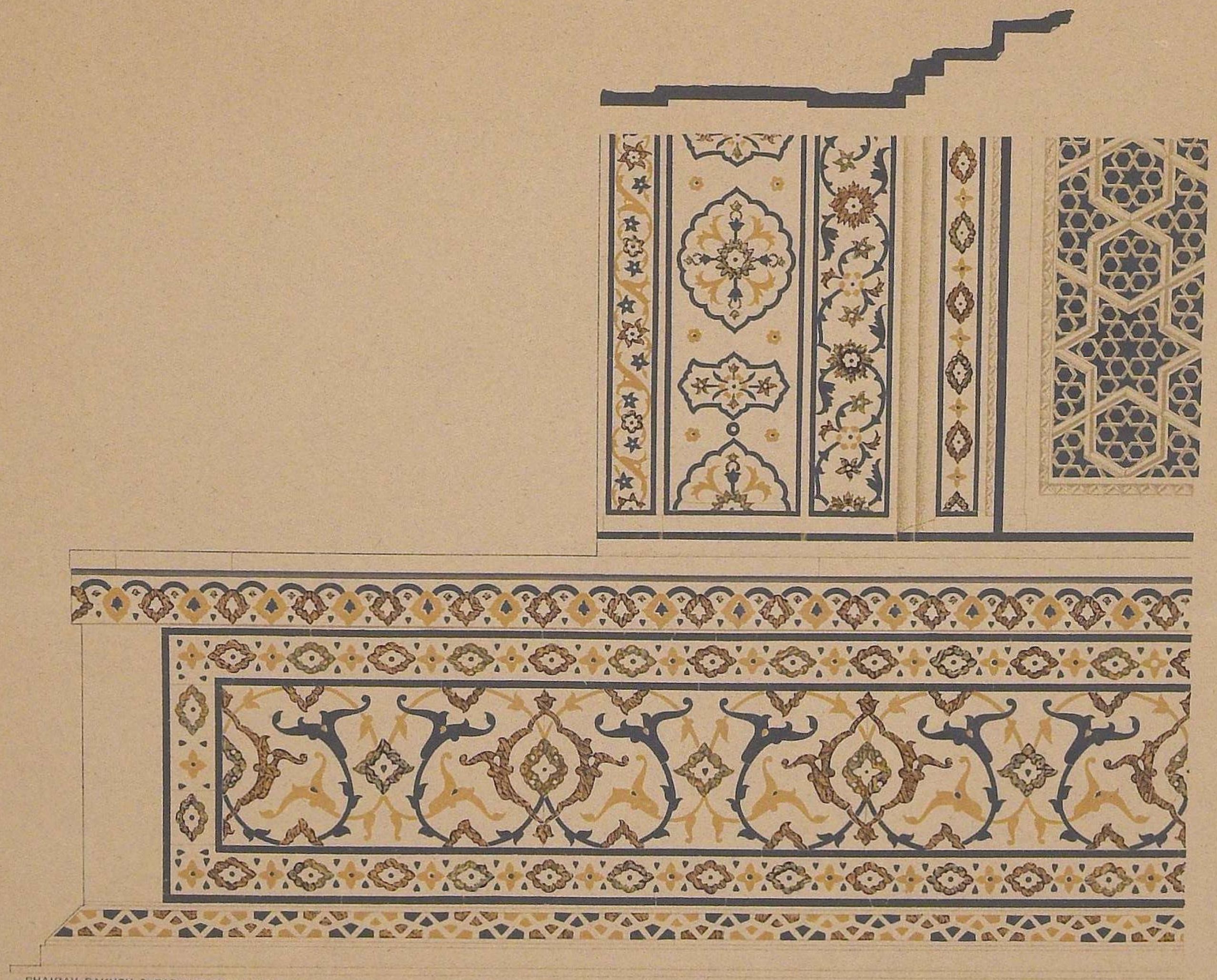
AGRA: ITIMAD-UD-DAULAH'S TOMB. INLAID ORNAMENTATION UPON THE PLINTH OF THE UPPER FLOOR.



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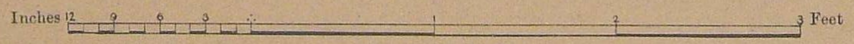


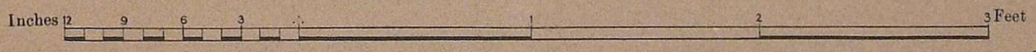

SCALE OF FEET

Edmd. W. Smith

*Archæological Surveyor N.W.P.*

AGRA: ITIMAD-UD-DAULAH'S TOMB. INLAID ORNAMENTATION UPON THE UPPER PART OF THE TURRETS UPON THE ANGLES OF THE BUILDING.

BHAIRAV BAKHSH & FAZL-UD-DIN II. DEL.




SCALE OF FEET

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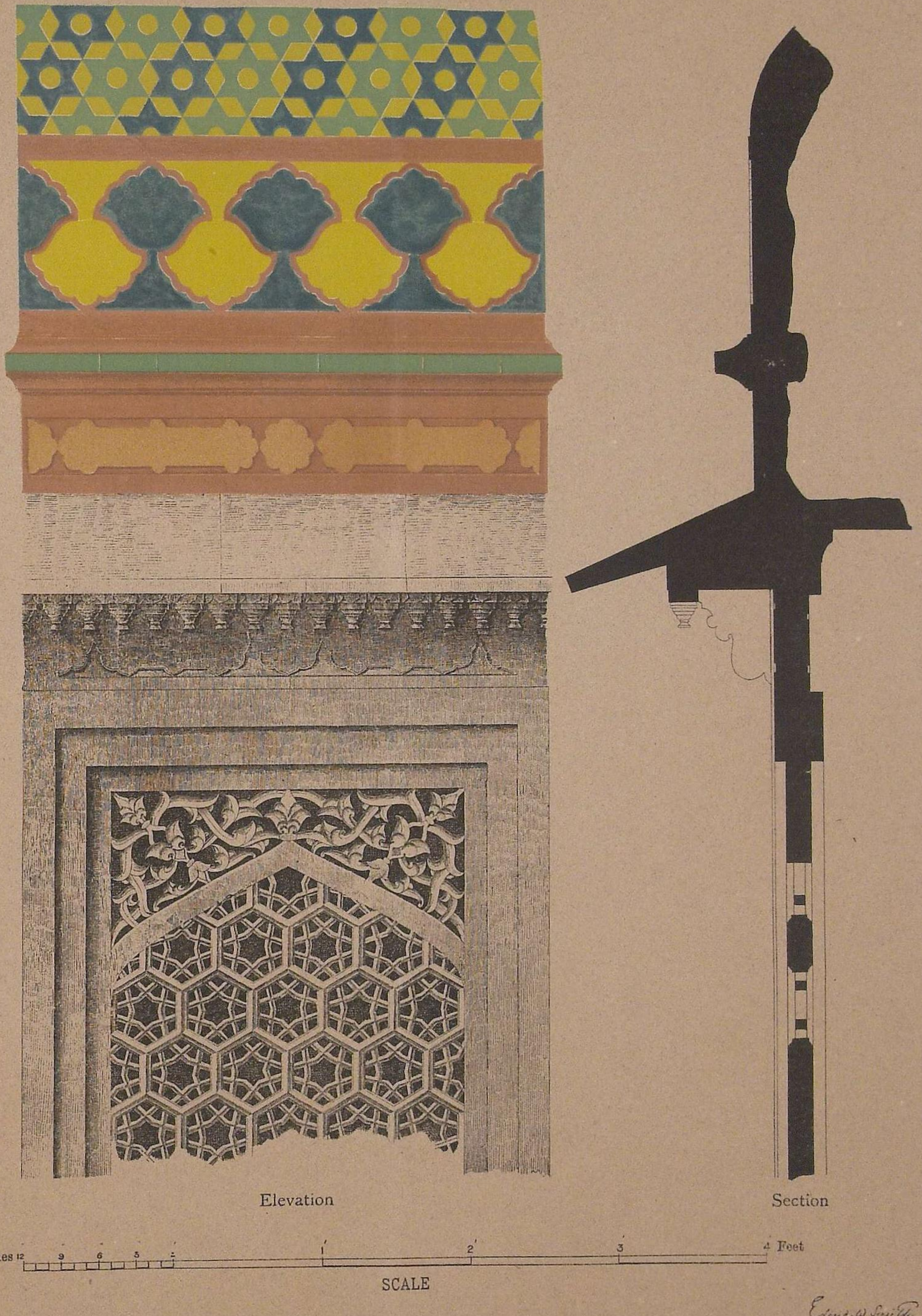
SIKANDRA: THE KÂNCH MAHAL. DETAIL OF THE UPPER PART OF THE BAY WINDOWS.

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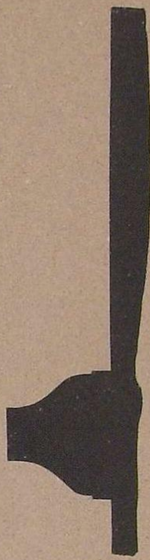
*Archæological Surveyor N.W.P.*

FAZL-UD-DIN I. & SOHUN LAL, DEL.

SIKANDRA: The Kâñch Mahal. Detail of the Main Cornice and Panelling upon the Porch Walls.

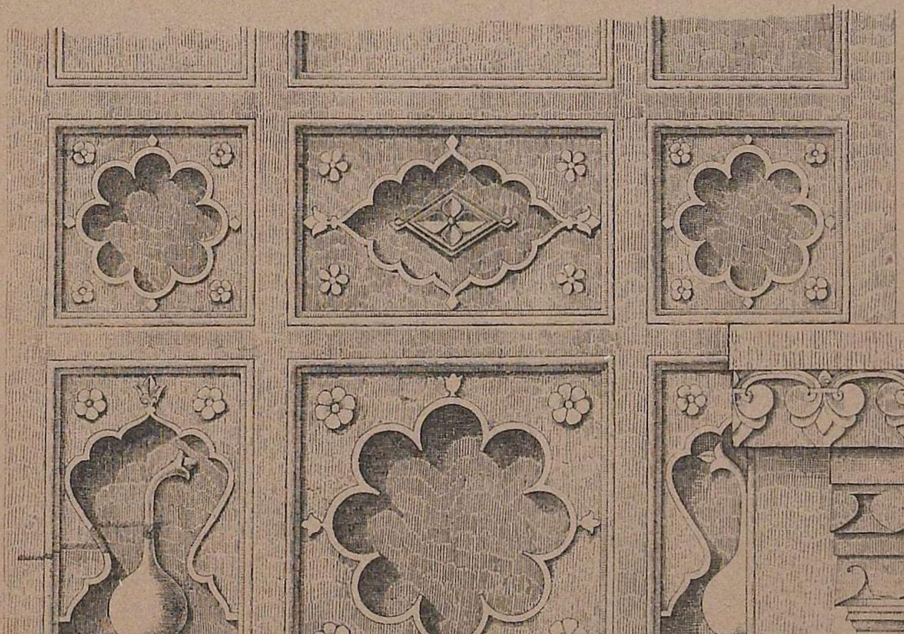
Fig. 1. Detail of coloured tiles on main cornice.



Section

Inches 12 9 6 3 1 2 3 Feet

SCALE OF FEET



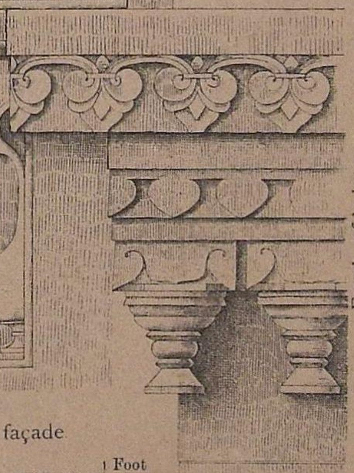



Fig. 2. Stone panelling on sides of window over porch doorway, North façade

Inches 12 9 6 3 1 Foot

SCALE

Ram Singh & Bhairav Bakhsh, Del.

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